

Does Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* breed in the interior of continental South America?

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Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* is a cosmopolitan species whose distribution is centred on the tropics. Six subspecies are generally recognised (e.g., Gochfeld & Burger 1996, Dickinson 2003), of which three occur in the Western Hemisphere. *G. n. aranea* breeds in eastern North America and some of the northern West Indies, and reportedly winters south as far as Brazil and Peru; *G. n. vanrossemi* breeds in western North America and reportedly winters south to Ecuador (although Ridgely & Greenfield 2001 argued that no noticeable increase in numbers in the last-named country is evident during the boreal winter); and *G. n. groenvoldi* breeds in coastal French Guiana south to north-east Argentina. Gochfeld & Burger (1996) considered the racial identity of birds breeding in coastal Ecuador to be uncertain, and subsequently Ridgely & Greenfield (2001) were also unable to assign Ecuadorian breeders to taxon. The species has also been mentioned as a breeder in northern coastal Peru (Gochfeld & Burger 1996), but Blake (1977) and Schulenberg *et al.* (2007) considered it to be solely a rare boreal migrant in the country.

In Brazil, unlike parts of the Old World, the species is restricted to coasts, from at least Pará (on islands in the Amazon estuary) south and east to Rio Grande do Norte, with an apparently separate population in southernmost Brazil, in Rio Grande do Sul (De Luca *et al.* 2006). Very little seems to have published concerning breeding, although Sick (1997) noted that the species commences nesting in August at the mouth of the Amazon. De Luca *et al.* (2006) were aware of only two recent breeding sites, one in Rio Grande do Sul, the other in Rio Grande do Norte, and the first-named is apparently no longer occupied. No inland records were mentioned by Sick (1997) and neither did Tubelis & Tomas (2003) list *G. nilotica* for the Pantanal wetland, despite that several other waterbirds otherwise primarily restricted to Brazilian coasts occur there. However, GMK & C. F. Collins observed one midstream in the Amazon c.20 km west of Monte Alegre, Pará, on 8 December 2005 (*Cotinga* 25: 92), c.600 km from the Atlantic Ocean. There are other unpublished records from the general region of Santarém (C. B. Andretti pers. comm.) and K. M. Aguiar photographed one there on 31 July 2010 (www.wikiaves.com.br/176659&p=1&t=c&c=1506807&s=10373). Elsewhere, in western Venezuela, Gull-billed Terns are regular in reasonable numbers at Hato El Cedral, Apure, between December and April / May (Hilty 2003; GMK pers. obs.), while in Amazonian Peru, up to two individuals were present at Iquitos, Loreto, in September–



Figure 1. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Ilha da Benta, west of Itacoatiara, Amazonas, Brazil, November 2011 (Jon Hornbuckle)

October 2005 (Westerduijn 2007), but inland records are generally rare throughout northern South America, with none reported in Colombia (Hilty & Brown 1986, Arzuza *et al.* 2008) or published from Ecuador (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). However, in the latter country, at least two observers have reported Gull-billed Terns, on multiple occasions, from the río Napo as far downstream as Yuturi (D. Cisneros-Heredia & B. Palacios *in litt.* 2012, to J. F. Freile). In the south of the continent, Blake (1977) mentioned that the species does range inland as far as Corrientes, along the Paraná and Uruguay rivers.

On 21–22 November 2011 we visited several islands in the Amazon west of the town of Itacoatiara, Amazonas state, almost 1,100 km from the Atlantic. On the Ilha da Benta (c.03°21'N, 58°49'W), where we found c.300 Large-billed Terns *Phaetusa simplex* and 200 Black Skimmers *Rhynchops niger*, many of which were either breeding (nests with eggs) or had recently finished nesting (fledged young), on 21 November we encountered two Gull-billed Terns, apparently a pair, 'dive-bombing' us and giving *ack* calls on the north-east side of the island (Fig. 1). They were directly accompanied and joined in this behaviour by several Large-billed Terns, of which at least two pairs had nests on the open sand. Next day, four well-spaced adult Gull-billed Terns were observed on the south side of the same island, all of them perched at the water's edge, usually among small groups of *P. simplex*.

In relation to assessing evidence of breeding, Cramp (1985) stated that dive-attacks are frequently performed in defence of the breeding grounds against perceived threats, although they can also be given at other times, e.g. at feeding grounds. That the birds we observed were in suitable breeding habitat and were directly joining incubating Large-billed Terns in making such anti-predator attacks suggests that they too were nesting. Gull-billed Tern is known to nest in association with other species in many regions of the world (Cramp 1985, Gochfeld & Burger 1996). P. Castell (*in litt.* 2012), an observer with great experience of the breeding biology of Western Palearctic birds, confirmed that the behaviour we witnessed is strongly indicative (though not confirmatory) of breeding. However, it must be remarked that our observations would also be coincident seasonally with North American migrants.

Field workers in Brazilian Amazonia should be aware of the possibility that Gull-billed Tern could breed in this region, despite the availability of very few published records from anywhere in the interior of South America. It also would be interesting to learn the current status of the breeding colonies of *G. nilotica* in the Amazon estuary, especially given the near-chronic lack of recent nesting data for the species elsewhere in Brazil.

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Clanga has priority over *Aquiloides* (or how to drop a clanger)

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When D. R. Wells & T. Inskipp decided to describe a new genus for the spotted eagles, Wells informally asked us if a generic name already existed to accommodate the three species concerned: *Aquila clanga*, *A. pomarina* and *A. hastata*. We concluded that none of the species appeared to be the type of a generic name applicable to the group as a whole, based on the current state of the senior author's database of avian generic names, and the synonymies in Sharpe (1874). This, in hindsight, was a serious mistake and one which would not have occurred but for a mischance.

No sooner had the *Aquiloides* article (Wells & Inskipp 2012) been published in the last number of this journal, than it became obvious that there is a generic synonym with priority, a fact quickly pointed out by R. Klim, who alerted us to a lively discussion on www.birdforum.net.

The name that should have been used is *Clanga*, although on examination it was by no means certain, at least initially, who the correct author was, or the correct date of publication. The original document is in the *Revue et Magazin de Zoologie*, second series, vol. IX, dated 1857. On p. 591 commences a lengthy obituary for Comte Constantin Tyzenhauz (1786–1853) by F. A. Adamowicz, followed by a list of the deceased's works beginning on p. 601, concluding on p. 604 with item 19, taken from an 1853 MS entitled 'Observations sur la faune ornithologique des provinces de la Nouvelle-Russie situées sur les côtes de la mer Noire.' The snippet introducing the new genus is: '... suivies de la proposition de former un nouveau genre *Clanga*, subdivisé en trois espèces: *Clanga naevia* (*Falco maculatus*, Gmelini), *C.[.] fasciata* et *C. macrodactyla* (v. der Muhle), ...'. The authorship of the new name seemed to be either Anon., or Adamowicz, but M. Kuziemko (pers. comm.) has advised us that Ferdinand Adam Adamowicz (1802–81) was a respected Polish veterinarian and science historian, born in Vilnius, so it would be correct to at least presume that the list was his work, in the absence of contrary evidence.

Two experts on nomenclature, C. Lyal and S. Nikolaeva, confirmed that the unusual publication of the generic name *Clanga* within a list of papers in the obituary of Count Tyzenhauz should be considered valid because it was published in a well-recognised scientific journal, and that the conditions for publication, including the mention of included species, were met. Its omission from Sharpe (1874) may have been an oversight due to its unlikely insertion or due to a view that it was not validly introduced.